

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FROM THE SENATE INTERNAL SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE

May 17, 1960

WASHINGTON, D. C.--America's commercial communication networks, backbone of the nation's elaborate plans against surprise attack, would be protected from vulnerability which is causing grave concern among defense leaders under a bill introduced today by Senator James O. Eastland.

The original bill (S.3560) was drafted and reported favorably from the Senate Judiciary Committee, of which Senator Eastland is chairman, following closed session testimony by defense officials before the Internal Security Subcommittee.

The bill would amend present law to extend criminal penalties for malicious damage to communications facilities to those "used or intended to be used for military or civil defense functions of the United States." The law presently applies only to communications "operated or controlled by the United States."

The hearing concerning the problem was made public today with the introduction of the bill.

Testimony and statements pointed out that though every facet of the nation's planned protection from surprise attack -- from civil defense to the launching of retaliatory missiles -- is dependent on commercial communication lines, the law only applies to sabotage on facilities operated or controlled by the government.

Officials who gave views on the situation were: Brig. Gen. Wendell H. Duplantis, deputy assistant director of communications and warning of the Office of Civil Defense Mobilization; Brig. Gen. John H. Bestic, deputy director of communications-electronics, United States Air Force. Also included in the record was a memorandum concerning the proposed legislation by Malcolm R. Wilkey, assistant attorney general, Criminal Division.

The language of the new bill follows that suggested by Assistant Attorney Wilkey.

General Duplantis said his organization is responsible for operating the national warning system (NAWAS), the networks connecting the various stations of the conelrad system, and the Federal civilian agency communication systems.

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"It is apparent," General Duplantis said, "that few, if any, of our systems are operated or controlled by the United States. Rather, these networks are owned by commercial carriers and are under their complete supervision."

He said that "willful or malicious damage could isolate from the OCDM networks an entire city or even a state and thereby cause the use of substitute facilities which might seriously handicap immediate implementation of OCDM programs for civilian defense. A future enemy would like nothing better, for example, than to disrupt our warning system just prior to attack. Many lives could be lost that otherwise might be saved."

General Bestic said the Air Force is "probably the largest single user of commercial communications in the United States. . .Because of our extensive use. . .we are vitally interested in their security."

Among the systems operated by the Air Force through commercial lines are the Strategic Air Command primary alerting system, which enables SAC headquarters to alert 70 SAC bases immediately; the ballistic missile early warning system now being constructed, extensive communication networks for control and operating of Atlas and Titan missile-launching bases, nuclear bomb detection and alarm system.

Mr. Wilkey's memorandum recommends that the Department of Justice "strigently endorse the purposes of H. R. 8138," a House measure dealing with the same subject. However, a change in wording was suggested by Mr. Wilkey, which was incorporated in the newly-introduced Senate bill.

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